



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE MONIST

---

## OUR MONISM.

### THE PRINCIPLES OF A CONSISTENT, UNITARY WORLD-VIEW.

THE question, What are the essential features of Monism? was brought home to me when I read in the last number of *The Monist* the critical remarks made with reference to the new edition of my "Anthropogeny." I shall here endeavor briefly to draw up the outlines of my conception of the world in a manner which will indicate the most characteristic features of my views. Thus both the agreements with and the divergences from the position editorially upheld in *The Monist* will plainly appear.

As is the case with the majority of philosophical differences, so also in the present instance I find that the divergences which exhibit themselves in our respective unitary conceptions of the world are in part only apparent and in part occasioned by the divergent significances of our fundamental ideas. But this will, perhaps, be made clearer by the following methodically arranged eight theses.

#### I. MONISM.

Like all general concepts of fundamental scope, that of monism also is liable to different definitions and divergent modifications,—the natural result of individual differences of subjective conception. In the determinate sense in which monism is at present employed by the majority of philosophers and physical in-

quirers, the sense which I believe I was the first to establish in 1866 in my "General Morphology" (Vol. I, p. 105), it denotes a unitary or *natural* conception of the world, in opposition to a *supernatural* or mystical one, that is, in opposition to *dualism*. For us, accordingly, there exists (in the sense of Goethe) *no* opposition whatsoever between nature and mind, between World and God. Mental existences, "spirits," outside nature, or in opposition to nature, do not exist. What are commonly termed the "mental sciences,"—for example, philology, history, and philosophy,—are in reality simply a part of *physical philosophy*, of *Natur-philosophie*. The latter discipline embraces, in our opinion, the entire body of human knowledge; it is based upon *empiricism*, on the experiences, the observations, and the experiments of physical inquiry; but it does not become *philosophy* until it has brought together and united its empiric products, abstracted general laws from its isolated experiential facts, and *synthetised* the isolated results which *analysis* has empirically ascertained.

## II. MECHANICALISM.

Since an early date, this important fundamental concept has frequently been used in three different and divergent senses, namely :

*A.* In its widest sense, as synonymous with *monism*; wherein mechanical causes (*causae efficientes*), in the sense of Kant, are assumed as the sole effective causes and are placed in opposition to the teleological causes (*causae finales*) in the sense of dualism. "Mechanical conception of the world" is in this sense synonymous with "monistic conception of the world."

*B.* In its more restricted sense, as a universal *motion*-principle of physics, so that, for example, the postulated ether-vibrations of optics, of electricity, and so forth, as well as the grosser material oscillations of acoustics, heat, and so forth, are designated as mechanical processes subject to definite laws. "Mechanical natural philosophy," in this sense, is identical with *physics*.

*C.* In its narrowest sense, as that *branch* of physics which deals with the grosser and visible processes of *motion*; as gravitation, locomotion, and the phronomy of organisms. Mechanics, in this

the most restricted sense, is viewed as opposed to optics, acoustics, etc.; as the usages of the schools indicate.

Since, now, the phrases "mechanical laws" and "mechanical explanation," at the present day even, are frequently understood in these three distinct senses, no end of misunderstandings arise. Such misunderstandings may be best avoided, perhaps, by retaining the notion of mechanics in its narrowest (*C*) sense, and by substituting *physics* for the next narrower sense (*B*) and *monism* for its most extended sense (*A*).

### III. PSYCHISM.

In exactly the same way as the idea of mechanicalism, so also that of psychism is employed in a three-fold divergent sense. As in the former case *motion*, so here *feeling* is conceived, now as a universal world-principle, now simply as a vital activity of all organisms, now simply as the particular mental activity of man.

*A.* In its widest sense: *Panpsychism*. All matter is ensouled, because all natural bodies known to us possess determinate chemical properties, that is to say react uniformly and by law when subjected to the determinate chemical (i. e. molecular-mechanical) influences of other bodies: *chemical affinity*. Simplest example: sulphur and quicksilver rubbed together form cinnabar, a new body of entirely different properties. This is possible only on the supposition that the molecules (or atoms) of the two elements if brought within the proper distance, mutually *feel* each other, by attraction move towards each other; on the decomposition of a simple chemical compound the contrary takes place: repulsion. (Empedocles's doctrine of the "love and hatred of atoms.")

*B.* In its more restricted sense: *Biopsychism*. The *organisms* alone are regarded as "ensouled," because here the chemical processes are more complicated and more striking (producing motions in cyclically repeated succession) than in the case of the so-called "dead matter" of the inorganic bodies. In particular does organic "irritability" appear here as a higher form of the physical reaction called "*Auslösung*" [the setting free, disengagement], and "soul-activity" (reflexes) again as a higher form of irritability. However, all the phenomena of organic life ultimately admit of

being reduced to "mechanical" (or "physico-chemical") processes that differ from the processes of the inorganic world only in point of degree or quantitatively, not qualitatively. ("General Morphology," I, Chap. V; VII, pp. 109-238. "Natural Creation," VIII, First Edition, Lecture XV.)

C. In its narrowest sense: *Zoopsychism*. Irritability, or universal organic soul-activity, such as is the attribute of all organisms, (identical with "life,") reaches a higher stage through abstraction, through the formation of *ideas*. *Feeling* and *will* become more distinctly separated. This real soul-life, which is the attribute only of the higher animals, passes through a long succession of different stages of development, the most perfect of which is the soul of man. The so-called "freedom of the will" is apparent only, as each single volitional action is determined by a chain of precedent actions which ultimately rest either upon *heredity* (propagation) or upon *adaptation* (nutrition). As these last are ("mechanically") reducible to molecular motions, the same also holds true of the former.

#### IV. THEISM.

The idea of god that alone appears to be logically compatible with monism, is pantheism (or "cosmotheism") in the sense of Goethe and Spinoza. God according to this view is identical with the sum-total of the force of the universe, which is inseparable from the sum-total of the matter of the universe. In opposition to this view stands *anthropotheism*. This is the outcome of dualism, which places God as a personal being in opposition to the "world" created by him, and consequently is always forced in its reasonings to resort to anthropomorphic expedients.

#### V. MATERIALISM.

The most important differences of form in which this much misunderstood and variously interpreted movement of philosophy has presented itself, may be classed as follows:

A. In its most extended sense: as synonymous with *monism* (or with mechanicalism). All the phenomena of the world are founded upon material processes, upon *motions* (mechanicalism) or upon *feelings* (psychism), both of which, as fundamental qualities, are in-

separable from matter. Immaterial forces or immaterial "spirits" (minds) are unknown to us. As Goethe once said, "Mind can never exist and act without matter, matter never without mind."

*B.* In its more restricted sense: originally matter alone exists and creates *secondarily* force (or "mind"). The fallacy of this view lies in its regarding the two things "matter and force" as disjoint and separate. According to our view the two are inseparably connected,—united in each atom from the very first.

#### VI. SPIRITUALISM.

This phase also of the world-conception has been the subject of the same misunderstandings and perverted conceptions as its apparent opposite, materialism.

*A.* In its most extended sense, spiritualism is susceptible of identification with *psychism*—consequently also with monism. For *feeling* (pleasure and pain) is just as much a thoroughly universal and fundamental property of matter (of each atom!) as is *motion* (attraction and repulsion). Every single "spirit" is inseparably united with some "matter."

*B.* In its more restricted sense: originally force alone exists and creates *secondarily* matter. This view, which is very old and very widely spread ("creation of the world"), is just as false and as one-sided as its contrary (5 *B*).

#### VII. IMMORTALISM.

The "belief in immortality" is scientifically (*critically*) tenable only as a *general* proposition, and is in this case identical with the most universal law of physics, the *conservation of energy* (coincidentally, of course, the conservation of matter). On the other hand, the widely disseminated *dogmatic* belief in a *personal* immortality, a belief supported by the mass of the ecclesiastical religions, and of utmost importance as the consciously or unconsciously assumed *base-axiom* of a great number of philosophical systems, is, *scientifically*, absolutely untenable. The "human soul" (i. e. the sum-total of the individual life-activity: feeling, motion,—will,—and idea) is simply a transient developmental phenomenon—a very highly developed "vertebrate-soul."

## VIII. COSMISM.

The determinate, and, as I believe, logical, form of the conception of the world, the principles of which I have advocated for thirty years, and whose most important aspects have been briefly outlined in the preceding paragraphs, may also be designated *cosmism*, to the extent that it proceeds from the fundamental idea that *cosmogony* or the "world-process," as *world-development*, is, within certain limits, (within the limits namely of a reduction to the basic notions: matter and its two inseparable fundamental qualities motion and feeling,) a *knowable* natural process. Cosmism is opposed, thus, to *agnosticism*.

\*                      \*                      \*

One highly important principle of my monism seems to me to be, that I regard *all* matter as *ensouled*, that is to say as endowed with *feeling* (pleasure and pain) and with *motion*, or, better, with the power of motion. As elementary (atomistic) attraction and repulsion these powers are asserted in every simplest chemical process, and on them is based also every other phenomenon, consequently also the highest-developed soul-activity of man. For the comprehension of this *graduated* psychical development of matter perhaps my three stages will be useful: III *A.* (Panpsychism), III *B.* (Biopsychism), III *C.* (Zoopyschism). So too consciousness, as the highest psychical action and the one most difficult to be explained, is in my views imply a higher stage of brain-activity, based upon the association, the abstraction, and centralisation of groups of ideas. Perhaps I have expressed myself poorly in these expositions, as I am little accustomed to dealing with philosophical axioms abstractly, and am too exclusively engaged in the concrete activity of my own special department. I cherish the hope, however, of being able within two or three years to devote more of my time to purely philosophical labors; when my work with the Challenger material, which has now absorbed twelve years of unremitting toil, is ended, my special zoological activity will have been completed; and I shall then find the opportunity of contributing more frequently to your highly valued magazines *The Monist* and *The Open Court*.

ERNST HAECKEL.